ARBiT
it happens here...



Honouring Courage and Knowledge: International Students' Day

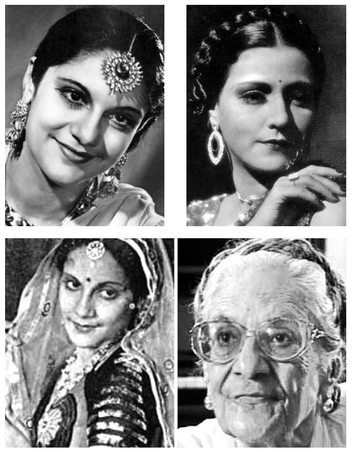
International Students' Day, observed annually on November 17, honours the courage, resilience, and contributions of students worldwide. It traces its origins to 1939, when students in Czechoslovakia protested against Nazi occupation, many paying the ultimate price for their activism. Today, the day serves as a reminder of the vital role students play in shaping societies, promoting education, and advocating for justice and equality. Universities, organizations, and communities celebrate through discussions, cultural events, and campaigns highlighting student rights, global education challenges, and the importance of academic freedom. It inspires youth to continue striving for knowledge and positive change.

राष्ट्रदूत
TUESDAY
17 November 2026
A-B

#JEWISH BOLLYWOOD WOMEN

Before the Khans and Kapoors

They embodied a new kind of femininity, independent, expressive, and unafraid of judgment



Long before dynasties like the Kapoor family and the era of superstar Khans defined Hindi cinema, an unexpected group of pioneers dominated the Indian film industry, Jewish women, many of whom broke social barriers and redefined stardom in early Bollywood.

A Community Arrives in India

Many of these actresses came from the Baghdadi Jews, a community that migrated to India in the 18th century. Settling primarily in cities like Mumbai (then Bombay) and Kolkata, they became known for their education, cosmopolitan outlook, and familiarity with Western culture. At a time when conservative social norms discouraged "respectable" Indian women from acting in films, these Jewish women stepped into the spotlight. Their willingness to perform in public made them central to the growth of early Indian cinema.

Reinventing Identity for the Screen

To appeal to wider audiences, many of these actresses adopted Hindi screen names. For instance, Ruby Myers became Sulochana, while Esther Victoria Abraham took on the name Pramila.

These new identities helped them integrate into the cultural fabric of Indian cinema, even as they retained distinct personal histories shaped by migration and minority identity.

Breaking Barriers and Setting Records

In an era when acting was considered taboo for many Indian women, these actresses were trailblazers. They were not only visible but immensely successful, some among the highest-paid stars of their time. They brought confidence, modernity, and boldness to the screen, often portraying characters that pushed social boundaries. Their presence helped normalize the idea of women in cinema and opened doors for future generations of Indian actresses.

The Rise of the "Vamp"

Many Jewish actresses became especially famous for playing vamps, characters that were glamorous, rebellious, and morally ambiguous. These roles, considered daring and unconventional, required a level of boldness that mainstream society often frowned upon. Yet, it was precisely this edginess that made them iconic. They embodied a new kind of femininity, independent, expressive, and unafraid of judgment, challenging traditional expectations of women in Indian society.

A Fading Legacy

As Indian cinema evolved and more Indian women began entering the industry, the dominance of Jewish actresses gradually declined. By the mid-20th century, many of these pioneers had faded from the spotlight.

Tragically, despite their immense contributions, several of them were largely forgotten. Some faced financial hardship and lived their later years in loneliness and poverty, a stark contrast to the fame and success they once enjoyed.

Remembering the Forgotten Pioneers

The story of these Jewish women is a vital yet often overlooked chapter in the history of Bollywood. They were not just performers but cultural bridge-builders who helped shape the identity of Indian cinema in its formative years. Before the Khans, before the Kapoors, there were these fearless women, outsiders who became stars, who challenged norms, and who left behind a legacy that still echoes, even if it is not always remembered.





He Conquered An Empire and Lost It In A Lifetime

In 332 BC, Alexander entered Egypt, where Persian rule had become unpopular among some Egyptians. He was welcomed and presented himself as a restorer of Egyptian traditions. He founded Alexandria and visited the oracle of Amun at Siwa Oasis.



● Kshema Jatuhkarna

Alexander the Great spent barely a decade building one of the largest empires the ancient world had ever seen. From Macedonia, his armies swept through Greece, defeated the Persian Empire, entered Egypt, crossed Central Asia, and reached the Indus Valley. Yet, when Alexander died at just 32, the empire he had created began to collapse almost immediately.

His story is one of ambition, military genius, loyalty, betrayal, and tragedy. And at the centre of the final chapter was Roxana, the woman who believed that protecting her unborn son could preserve Alexander's dynasty.

Alexander was born in 356 BC, the son of King Philip II of Macedon and Olympias. Philip had transformed Macedon into a formidable military power and made his son heir to a kingdom already preparing for expansion into Asia.

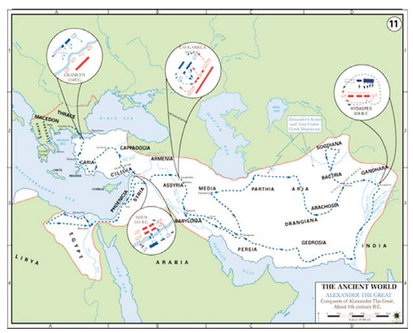
But Alexander's mother surrounded his birth with an even greater sense of destiny. According to later traditions, Olympias dreamed that a thunderbolt struck her womb and that flames spread across the land. Alexander would eventually encourage associations between himself and divine figures, particularly Zeus-Ammon in Egypt.

> The Persian king Darius III commanded a vast multinational empire, but Alexander repeatedly demonstrated that battlefield numbers were not everything. At Issus in 333 BC, Alexander personally led the attack towards Darius's position. His cavalry broke through the Persian formation, forcing Darius to flee.

One of the earliest stories demonstrating Alexander's extraordinary confidence involved a horse named Bucephalus. When the animal was brought to Philip's court, it was considered wild and impossible to tame. Alexander noticed that the horse was frightened by its own shadow. He turned it towards the sun, calmed it, and mounted it.

Philip was so impressed that, according to Plutarch, he told his son to find a kingdom large enough for his ambitions. Bucephalus became Alexander's famous companion and accompanied him through much of his Asian campaign.

Alexander was also educated by one of antiquity's greatest philosophers: Aristotle. Under Aristotle, he studied philosophy, medicine, literature, logic, ethics, and natural science. Alexander developed a particular admiration for Greek literature and reportedly knew passages of Homer by heart.



#ALEXANDER THE GREAT



But education alone would not make him a conqueror. His father had created a powerful Macedonian army, and Alexander inherited both its soldiers and its military system.

When Philip II was assassinated in 336 BC, Alexander became king.

He immediately faced resistance. The Greek city of Thebes rebelled, believing Macedonian control could be challenged. Alexander responded with overwhelming force. The city was destroyed, its population enslaved, and only the house of the poet Pindar was traditionally said to have been spared.

With Greece subdued, Alexander turned towards the enormous Persian Empire.

The Persian king Darius III commanded a vast multinational empire, but Alexander repeatedly demonstrated that battlefield numbers were not everything. At Issus in 333 BC, Alexander personally led the attack towards Darius's position. His cavalry broke through the Persian formation, forcing Darius to flee.

The Persian king abandoned his family on the battlefield. Alexander captured Darius's mother, wife, and children but treated them with unusual respect.

Darius attempted negotiations. He offered money, territory, and eventually marriage alliances and recognition of Alexander's authority over parts of the Persian world. Alexander refused. His objective was no longer to simply revenge for Persia's invasion of Greece. He wanted the Persian Empire itself.

In 332 BC, Alexander entered Egypt, where Persian rule had become unpopular among some Egyptians. He was welcomed and presented himself as a restorer of Egyptian traditions. He founded Alexandria and visited the oracle of Amun at Siwa Oasis.

There, according to ancient accounts, Alexander was associated with the god Amun, whom Greeks identified with Zeus. Later artistic representations sometimes showed Alexander with the horns of Ammon. Then came the decisive confrontation.

In 331 BC, Alexander met Darius again at Gaugamela. Darius had assembled an enormous army containing infantry, cavalry, chariots, and other forces from across his empire. Alexander was heavily outnumbered.

Once again, however, Alexander used movement and deception. His forces drew Persian troops away from the centre, creating an opening. Alexander then led a concentrated attack towards Darius and his royal guard.

Darius fled. The Persian army collapsed. Alexander captured enormous quantities of treasure, but Darius escaped eastward. Alexander pursued him, hoping to end the Persian resistance permanently. He never got the chance.

> He left no mature successor capable of immediately controlling his enormous empire. His wife Roxana was pregnant. According to ancient sources, Alexander's generals asked who should inherit the empire, and the famous answer was associated with "the strongest" rather than a clearly designated heir.

Darius was betrayed by his own followers, who bound him and abandoned him after mortally wounding him. When Alexander discovered the Persian king dying, ancient sources describe a striking reaction. Rather than celebrating, Alexander reportedly mourned him and ordered that Darius receive a royal burial. With Darius dead, Alexander became the undisputed ruler of the Persian Empire.

But ruling Persia created new problems. Alexander began adopting aspects of Persian court culture and incorporated Persian nobles into his administration. Some Macedonians resented these changes. The tensions eventually became violent. Alexander killed his longtime companion Cleitus the Black during a drunken confrontation after Cleitus criticized his adoption of Persian customs.

The empire continued expanding. Alexander moved through Central Asia and eventually reached the Indian subcontinent. His soldiers had been campaigning for years. At the Hyphasis River, modern-day Beas, they finally refused to advance farther east.

Alexander wanted to continue, but his exhausted army demanded to return home.

He eventually agreed.

By then, however, Alexander's empire stretched across an extraordinary portion of the known world. But its ruler was still only a young man.

In 324 BC, Alexander suffered another devastating personal loss when Hephaestion, his closest companion, died. Alexander reportedly entered deep mourning, and enormous ceremonies followed.

Yet, he continued planning new campaigns. Arabia was apparently next on his list. Then, in 323 BC, Alexander died in Babylon at the age of 32.

His exact cause of death remains uncertain. Ancient accounts describe a prolonged illness involving fever and worsening weakness, while later stories proposed poisoning. Modern historians generally regard the poisoning story as unproven.

But Alexander's greatest problem came after his death.

He left no mature successor capable of immediately controlling his enormous empire. His wife Roxana was pregnant. According to ancient sources, Alexander's generals asked who should inherit the empire, and the famous answer was associated with "the strongest" rather than a clearly designated heir. Alexander's generals soon fought one another in a series of conflicts known as the Wars of the Diadochi. Roxana understood what was at stake.

Alexander had other wives, including Stateira, daughter of Darius III. Ancient sources say that Roxana arranged for Stateira and her sister Drypteis to be killed, removing potential rivals to her unborn child. Roxana later gave birth to Alexander IV, the son of Alexander the Great. For a moment, it seemed she had protected the dynasty. But the empire was already breaking apart.

Alexander's generals divided territories among themselves. Macedonian power fragmented into competing kingdoms. The empire Alexander had built in less than thirteen years could not remain politically unified without him.

Roxana's position became increasingly dangerous.

Cassander, one of the leading Macedonian commanders, eventually captured Roxana and her young son Alexander IV. Around 310 or 309 BC, both were killed in secret on Cassander's orders.

The boy who had been born as the potential heir to Alexander's empire never inherited it.

Roxana, who had tried to eliminate rivals so that her son could survive, ultimately met the same fate she had feared for him.

Alexander had conquered an empire stretching from Greece to Egypt and deep into Asia. But he never solved the question that would determine its future: who could hold it together after him?

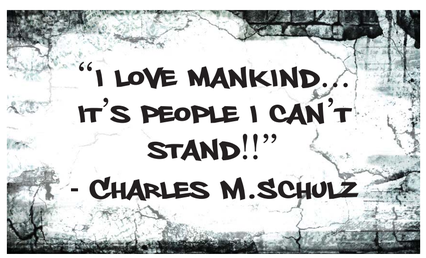
Within decades, his empire had fractured into competing successor kingdoms. Alexander conquered the world he knew. But he could not conquer time, death, or the ambitions of the men who survived him.

His greatest victory was the creation of an enormous empire. His greatest tragedy was that he died before creating a system capable of keeping it united.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

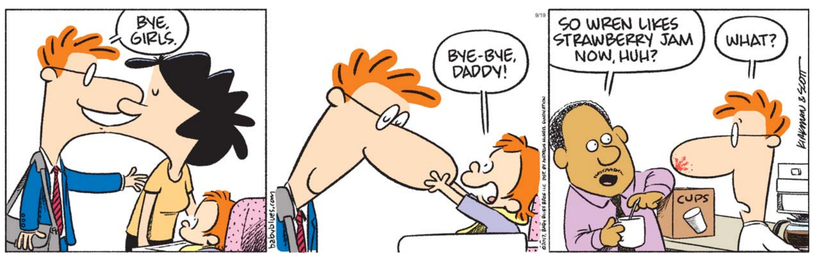


THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

